

EPA Region III

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EARLY BIRD HEADLINES

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*** MORNING HOT LIST ***

Dimock: A Town Divided

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA The nat-ural gas boom in Penn-syl-va-nia promises cheaper, cleaner burn-ing fuel, good jobs, and the pos-si-bil-ity that the U.S. could become inde-pen-dent of for-eign oil. But what are the costs? The tiny vil-lage of Dimock, Penn-syl-va-nia, home to about 1500 peo-ple, has some of the best pro-duc-ing Mar-cel-lus wells in the state. It is now famous world-wide. But not for the rea-sons some of the towns-folk would like. The name Dimock, has become syn-ony-mous with flam-ing taps and every-thing that could pos-si-bly go wrong when the gas drillers come to town. But the fight over Dimock's water and rep-u-ta-tion, has divided the town. Dimock is in the news because of claims that gas drilling has con-t-a-m-i-nated res-i-den-tial drink-ing water wells. Some in the town are furi-ous and are suing the drilling com-pany, Cabot Oil and Gas. Oth-ers are angry that the pub-lic-ity has the poten-tial of dri-ving down home val-ues, and insist the water dam-age is overblown and lim-ited to a few households. To get to Dimock, you drive through forested moun-tains, past pic-turesque dairy farms and come to one blink-ing yel-low light at a cross-roads of route 29 and route 3023. A post office and eye-glass shop sit on the cor-ner. GPS and iPhones don't work in this part of Penn-syl-va-nia. Before 9/11 cre-ated new secu-rity rules, most peo-ple here didn't have a street address. They didn't need one. There was a time neigh-bors all seemed to get along. But not anymore. Retired school teacher Vic-to-ria Switzer says gas drilling poi-soned her water with methane and drilling chem-i-cals. But she says some of her neigh-bors have turned against her. "They all want to be like the cou-ple of fam-i-lies that got rich," says Switzer. "They want to be like a Bev-erly Hill-billy or shale-ion-aire. It's about the money. They say I want my well I want my well!! They're not wor-ried about our water, but they want their well."

Cabot CEO on EPA Results

WBGH-TV BINGHAMTON, NY We recently had the chance to talk with the CEO of Cabot Oil and Gas. Dan Dinges told us that he's pleased that the recent water test results at 11 homes in Dimock, taken by the Environmental Protection Agency, support his company's data that shows the water meets drinking water standards. According to the EPA, the results did not show levels of contamination that would cause health concerns. The federal agency got involved last year because it wasn't convinced that the water in the area of Susquehanna County was safe. The goal of the EPA's testing is to determine if hydro-fracking contaminated wells. Dinges says Cabot's operation is prudent and not environmentally destructive. "We were not surprised by the results of the tests. We've been testing. We supplied the EPA with over 10,000 pages of water test documentation. The PA DEP has also had a number of water tests. We were perfectly comfortable with the water tests that had been furnished." The EPA is still sampling water supplies. In total, it will testing about 60 wells, some of those twice.

EPA Cleans Up New Power Plant Standards

CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE WASHINGTON - The Obama administration's tightening of pollution regulations for new coal-fired power plants Tuesday is a step in the right direction, Maryland politicians and environmentalists said, but some said it doesn't go far enough. The Environmental Protection Agency's pollution

standards would require new coal-fired plants to install additional pollution controls such as carbon-capture technology. The standards do not apply to existing power plants or those that will start construction within the next 12 months. Maryland Democratic Sen. Ben Cardin said the new rules should help improve the health of the imperiled Chesapeake Bay. "I applaud the years of thoughtful work and rigorous scientific study" that went into the EPA's creation of the regulations, Cardin said. "The scientific evidence of the threat that increased greenhouse gas emissions pose to Maryland and the health of Chesapeake Bay, to our nation's farmers and natural ecosystems, and most importantly to the world our children will inherit, is irrefutable." Others questioned the administration's reliance on carbon-capture technology -- a way of trapping carbon emissions and storing them underground -- as a tool for reducing pollution. "There's nobody in the world that does that today. It's very expensive," said former Bush administration EPA Air Administrator Jeff Holmstead. In a recent report, the Department of Energy said that the carbon-capture technology won't be commercially available until 2020, according to Holmstead. The ruling, Holmstead said, effectively bans new coal energy plants. Tommy Landers, the director of the advocacy group Environment Maryland, also believes carbon capture is a questionable idea. "I don't think (carbon capture) is a long-term solution. We need to reduce pollution at its source," he said. The exemption of existing power plants affects Maryland because the state is at the end of a "tailpipe" of pollution from other states, Landers said. In addition, there are nine coal-fired power plants in Maryland, and none of them use carbon-capture technology.

Editorial: Facts about shale gas are sorely needed

CUMBERLAND TIMES-NEWS (Md.) Responsible natural gas development from the Marcellus Shale formation could bring huge benefits for Maryland and its western counties and families, say the Baltimore-based Sage Policy Group and other experts. Horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (fracking) coax oil and natural gas from shale and other rock formations that previously refused to yield their hydrocarbon riches — reducing energy costs, creating jobs, and generating county and state revenue. This proven and rapidly advancing technology has obliterated claims that we are running out of petroleum. Instead, the USA finds itself blessed with centuries of oil and gas. By expanding supplies, fracking has reduced the price for clean-burning natural gas to under \$3 per thousand cubic feet (or million BTU), compared to \$8 a few years ago. The gas is supplanting coal for electricity generation. Costly new Environmental Protection Agency regulations are forcing many U.S. coal-fired power plants to shut down. Near term replacement plants will more likely be gas-powered than nuclear. Cheap gas will make heating and electricity more affordable for families, hospitals, government buildings and businesses, and feed stocks less expensive for makers of plastics, paints and other petrochemical products. That means thousands of jobs created or saved. Natural gas provides essential backup power for wind turbines, whose electricity generation plummets to zero 70-80 percent of the time, adversely affecting homes, schools, hospitals and businesses dozens of times every day. However, environmental activists are spreading unfounded fears about this technology. Calling it “dangerous” and “poisonous,” they claim “unregulated” companies operate with little concern for ecological values and causing cancer, earthquakes and groundwater contamination. The allegations have prompted Maryland and other states to launch drawn-out studies or impose moratoria that will postpone drilling and the benefits it would bring. Facts are sorely needed. Drilling and fracking have been carefully and effectively regulated by states for decades. As studies by the University of Texas and state agencies have documented, there has never been a confirmed case of groundwater contamination due to fracking. Even EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson acknowledges that.

Chesapeake grasses down in 2011

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.) BALTIMORE -- Underwater grasses in the Chesapeake Bay declined more than 20 percent last year, hurt by summer heat and heavy rains and snowmelt that sent tons of mud and debris into the bay, the Chesapeake Bay Program said Wednesday. The losses mean levels of the grasses that provide food and homes for fish, birds and other species have dropped to their lowest point since 2006. Scientists said grasses are now at historically low levels, but the news was tempered by growth found in some parts of the bay. The underwater grasses are important to the health of the Chesapeake because in addition to providing habitat for crabs and striped bass, they also improve water clarity by trapping sediment, add oxygen to bay water, provide food for waterfowl and help prevent shoreline erosion. Heavy rains from back-to-back storms that caused widespread flooding throughout the Northeast last fall sent tons of garbage and sediment into the bay. That raised concerns about damage to underwater grasses in the upper bay, but the Chesapeake Bay Program said last year that aerial photos taken in November showed

the damage was not as bad as feared.

Environmental regulators list Virginia's worst polluters

ROANOKE TIMES The Radford Arsenal is again at the top of the list, but the DEQ says the state's overall emissions have decreased. An ammunition plant, a paper mill and a coal-burning power plant are among the biggest polluters in Western Virginia, according to a report released Wednesday by state environmental regulators. Topping the statewide list for the fourth consecutive year was the Radford Army Ammunition Plant, which in 2010 released 12.5 million pounds of toxins, mostly into the New River. The plant, also known as the Radford Arsenal, churned out nearly four times the emissions of the second-ranking facility, a power plant in Chesterfield. Each year, factories, power plants and other industries are ranked by the Toxics Release Inventory, compiled by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Third on the list is MeadWestvaco Corp., a paper mill in Covington that released 3.3 million pounds of toxins in 2010, the most recent year for which numbers are available. The Clinch River Power Plant in Russell County was the other Western Virginia facility to make the DEQ's top 10 list of polluters. The coal-fired plant ranked eighth in the state, with 1.5 million pounds of toxins released, most of them into the air. Statewide, the amount of chemicals released in 2010 from all facilities covered by the report was down 4.2 percent from the year before, according to the DEQ. And most of the facilities — which released a total of 46.3 million pounds of chemicals into the land, air and water in 2010 — are in compliance with state permits that regulate their emissions, said DEQ spokesman Bill Hayden. In general, the permits set limits well below levels that are considered to be a risk to public health or the environment. Still, environmentalists said the numbers show a need for increased regulation. "Virginia's waterways are a polluter's paradise right now," said Laura Anderson, a field organizer for Environment Virginia, which last week released a report showing that the 18 million pounds of toxins dumped into Virginia lakes, rivers and streams is the second-largest amount in the nation.

State to finalize Chesapeake Bay clean-up plan March 30

WEST VIRGINIA STATE JOURNAL The Chesapeake Bay Program is approaching a — pardon the bad but almost unavoidable pun — watershed moment. It's the shift from years of informal intention for a healthy bay to firm pollution reduction commitments on a timeline. "We've been working toward these commitments for almost two decades and all the actors have been sort of slip-sliding around," said Joseph Hankins, immediate past chairman of the Jefferson County Public Service District, in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. "Now we'll have understandable benchmarks and milestones," Hankins said. Known especially for its crabs, clams and oysters, the bay was found in the 1970s to have a massive "dead zone" at its center: a section depleted of oxygen by blooms of algae fed, in large part, by nutrients from fertilizer running off of farms and lawns. In addition, sediment from increasing development across the watershed was clogging habitat at the bottom of the bay. In 2010, following decades of failed clean-up attempts, the Environmental Protection Agency completed a Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load. The TMDL is a modeling exercise that aims to achieve water quality standards by inventorying pollution sources and setting a pollution "budget." The idea was to clean up the bay by 2025. And on March 30, the states in the bay watershed have to file Phase II Watershed Implementation Plans, or WIPs, with the EPA. "What we've been working out over the past year and a half is where the cuts occur to meet the constraints in the TMDL — how to actually meet the targets," Hankins said. "The Phase II WIP really commits us as a state and locks us into milestones for 2017 and 2025." Affected in West Virginia are the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac highlands counties — Jefferson, Berkeley, Morgan, Hampshire, Mineral, Hardy, Grant and Pendleton — as well as the small part of Monroe County, in the southeast part of the state, which lies in the James River watershed. The Phase II WIP sets milestones for various sectors in those counties, such as urban and construction stormwater, wastewater treatment, and agriculture — by far the largest land use in the West Virginia Potomac drainage. Milestones address the range of approaches to controlling nutrient and sediment pollution. Two-year milestones include, in urban and construction stormwater, creation of a statewide stormwater management guidance manual; in wastewater, tracking of wastewater treatment plant upgrade and permit compliance schedules; and, in agriculture, development nutrient management plans for Confined Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs.

Feds take first step toward possible offshore drilling in Va.

NORFOLK VIRGINIAN PILOT

NORFOLK -- The federal government cracked open the door Wednesday to possible drilling for oil and natural gas off the Virginia coast, a policy shift applauded by Gov. Bob McDonnell but jeered by environmentalists. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced the change, which affects all mid-Atlantic and Southern coastal states, after touring a company in downtown Norfolk that specializes in collecting and analyzing scientific data from ocean depths. Salazar and Tommy Beaudreau, director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, said they will consider plans to allow companies like Fugro Atlantic to go offshore and conduct seismic tests and other research to determine what natural resources might lie beneath the Outer Continental Shelf of the Atlantic Ocean. Such work was shelved by President Barack Obama two years ago when he decided to block proposed drilling leases for oil and gas off Virginia after the record oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Virginia today is not included in a national list of recommended offshore lease sites for 2012-2017. However, Salazar said that if scientific research is allowed, and if it shows ample resources exist that energy companies might safely extract, the state could be added to that list through a special amendment. The turnabout, Salazar said, stems from the president's new "all of the above" energy policy, which includes more exploration and drilling for domestic fossil fuels, as well as developing cleaner alternative sources such as solar and wind. McDonnell reacted quickly to the announcement, thanking the Obama administration for the "small step forward" but adding that it follows "many previous steps back." "We should be looking for every opportunity to safely produce more domestic energy," the governor said in a statement. "Our citizens need the jobs; our nation needs the energy. Instead, the Obama administration declared a seven-year timeout. That was the wrong decision." A Sierra Club activist, Ellis James, appeared at a news conference Wednesday at Fugro Atlantic's offices in Norfolk and carried signs urging no offshore drilling. James said he was disappointed but not surprised by Salazar's announcement, adding that offshore testing and research is not safe and should be opposed.

House approves 7.5 percent natural gas tax

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.) BALTIMORE — House lawmakers Monday night passed a 7.5 percent state severance tax on natural gas in a 82-51 vote, after delegates on Saturday fended off an amendment from Delegate Wendell Beitzel, R-Garrett, that would cap state and local taxes on natural gas extraction at 7.5 percent combined. "The amendment would incorporate all severance taxes," Beitzel said. "Local, county and state taxes together could not exceed 7.5 percent." Garrett County currently has a severance tax of 5.5 percent, which means the state could assess a severance tax of only 2 percent under Beitzel's amendment. Allegany County's severance tax of 7 percent would limit the state's share to just 0.5 percent. Higher rates were needed to enforce regulations, proponents say. Delegate Maggie McIntosh, D-Baltimore City, chair of the House Environmental Matters Committee and a sponsor of the severance tax, said applying different rates to every county would create administrative problems. She also said the 7.5 percent cap Beitzel proposed would not provide enough money for the regulatory oversight needed to protect human health and the environment. "Limiting the state to .05 percent would be wrong," McIntosh said. "It's going to be the state that's called for environmental cleanup and for other kinds of issues that happen ... when drilling begins." McIntosh suggested that Garrett and Allegany counties could lower their severance taxes to make the tax more "reasonable" to gas companies. The 7.5 percent tax was amended down from 15 percent by the House Ways and Means Committee on March 20 by a vote of 16-5. The severance tax is primarily aimed at Marcellus shale exploration, which requires the process of hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," to free gas trapped in shale formations deep in the Earth's surface. But the 7.5 percent severance tax will also apply to conventional gas wells that are not drilled using the fracking method. Fracking has been blamed for contamination of groundwater in Pennsylvania and New York over the last decade, where Marcellus Shale exploration has been the most active. New York placed a moratorium on fracking three years ago until it could be regulated. Lawmakers there are now poised to lift the moratorium.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Blog: Condomania for Earth Day: Endangered species-themed condoms to be given away Events and announcements for Earth Day are rolling in. Among them, one that will certainly have people a-twitter: A plan by the Center for

Biological Diversity to hand out more than 100,000 endangered species condoms that day. No, not for endangered species to use. For people to use. To the Center, this makes perfect sense. Part of the reason species are in decline is because the planet is becoming overpopulated. So if they can jazz up birth control and get people to think about it, all the better. The packets will come in six versions, with pictures of six endangered species plus slogans.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Peters joins fight to regulate drilling Peters council members voted this week to join a consortium of municipalities and an environmental group that plan to mount a legal challenge to the state's new law overseeing Marcellus Shale gas regulation, possibly as soon as today. On Monday, council joined at least seven municipalities from Washington, Allegheny and Bucks counties, along with an environmental group called Delaware River Keepers than plan the challenge. The local municipalities include Robinson, Cecil, Mt. Pleasant and Peters in Washington County, and South Fayette in Allegheny County. In Bucks County, Yardley and Nockamixon plan to participate in the lawsuit, lawyer John Smith said. Most of the municipalities participating in the action have been at odds with drilling companies for a variety of reasons, including regulations that the industry feels are too stringent. Local municipal officials have been meeting regularly since Gov. Tom Corbett signed Act 13 into law on Feb. 14. It's set to take effect April 14, and will establish an annual fee for gas drillers based on the price of natural gas. Most importantly to local government officials, though, is a provision in the law that strips municipalities of most of their authority in determining where gas wells and related infrastructure, such as pipelines and compressor stations, should be located. The law will replace local zoning regulations with state guidelines in dozens of local municipalities. Under the new law, municipalities with conflicting ordinances, such as Peters, Cecil and Robinson, would have 120 days to amend their drilling regulations to reflect new state laws. If municipalities don't make the required adjustments, they could lose out on impact fees and be forced to pay legal fees for drilling companies.

Opposition to Marcellus compressor station voiced More than two dozen residents voiced strong opposition to the first proposed permit for a Marcellus Shale gas compressor station in Allegheny County at a public hearing in Lawrenceville Tuesday night. Some warned of the health effects seen at other compressor sites in an effort to persuade the Allegheny County Health Department to deny a permit for a Superior Appalachian Pipeline LLC compressor installation proposed for Kissick Lane near the Pittsburgh Mills Mall in Frazer. "It's ludicrous that we're here talking about adding to the infrastructure because so many have told us of the ramifications," said Sarah Scholl, a public health worker. "This has to stop. Someone has to take a stand against this." The Superior Appalachian facility would include five natural gas fueled compressor engines, three natural gas heated dehydrators/reboilers and two 6,500-gallon storage tanks. The health department's draft installation permit classifies the facility as a "minor source" of air toxins, emitting 35 tons of nitrogen oxides and 17 tons of volatile organic compounds a year, plus 7 tons of formaldehyde and almost 11 tons of soot and fine particles. Ken Magyar, vice president for project development with Superior, assured the health department of his company's intentions to meet and in some cases exceed regulations, provide training to first responders to prepare for an emergency and lessen the impact on residents. "We look forward to being a good neighbor in Frazer Township and north Allegheny County," he said. Mr. Magyar said the site is not expected to have significant impact on air quality. But others called for the county to not only study emissions released from the Superior facility, but also aggregate those emissions with other shale gas operations in the area to determine the cumulative impact before approving another facility. The Health Department has said the compressor station will be located near two producing Marcellus Shale gas wells. "Aggregation is not just a technicality," said Matt Walker of the Clean Air Council. "It's basically a linchpin making sure the Clean Air Act is doing what it is supposed to." Current state regulations use a quarter mile as a major qualifying criteria for determining if shale gas facilities should be considered as individual minor sources, as the Superior station is listed, or a single, major source of air pollutants, which are more strictly regulated.

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Proposed gas compressor another chink If Frazer gets a compressor station, it would be one of nearly 400 across the state complicating the state's air pollution challenge. Pennsylvania has 385 compressor stations, most used for gas produced in the shale drilling boom, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection. The stations, which compress gas to get it to move through pipelines, release air pollutants that compound the state's long-standing ozone problem. "By itself, this compressor station is a relatively, truly minor source of pollution," said Jim Thompson, manager of Allegheny County's Air Quality Program, which is studying a permit application for a compressor station in

Frazer. "That's the whole problem with Marcellus shale," he said. "By themselves, they're relatively insignificant. But when you put them all together, then you may have a very large effect." Some residents and environmental groups are trying to prevent Superior Appalachian Pipeline from getting the Frazer permit. Most compressors produce emissions by burning natural gas or diesel fuel. Their biggest air pollutants typically are nitrogen oxides, which help form ozone in the atmosphere, Thompson and others said. Ozone forms when air pollutants mix with sunlight, and while it's mostly an irritant, it attacks lung tissue and can lead to respiratory diseases and asthma, according to health and air experts. Oil and gas operations in the Barnett shale in Texas likely created more air pollution than cars did in the Dallas region in 2009, according to a report from a Southern Methodist University engineer and commissioned by the Environmental Defense Fund. Pennsylvania is charting air emissions as part of a data survey due to the federal government by year's end, DEP spokesman Kevin Sunday said. Emissions can vary widely depending on the capacity of the compressor stations and the technologies used to operate them. Compressor stations can emit between 20 tons and 95 tons per year of nitrogen oxides, according to Joe Osborne, who reviews permits as legal director of the Garfield-based Group Against Smog and Pollution. That would be equivalent to the nitrogen oxides that about 1,000 to 5,000 cars produce in a year.

BEAVER COUNTY TIMES

Lawsuits filed by residents, gas driller DARLINGTON TWP. — Land use, gas, oil, trees and bats are at the center of lawsuits filed by Beaver County residents and a Marcellus shale drilling company. A group of 17 Darlington Township landowners filed a civil suit in Beaver County Court Tuesday against Oklahoma City-based Chesapeake Energy Corp. and its subsidiaries, alleging fraud. The suit lists Kevin McRoberts of 369 Enon Road as the lead plaintiff in the case. McRoberts' wife, Connie McRoberts, referred all questions regarding the lawsuit to their attorney, Steven Townsend. "We're going to fight for these landowners .. for their rights," Townsend said. "It's time for these people to stop being bullied around." Townsend said no one is protecting the landowners who entered into agreements based on misrepresentation. He said people get more protection through a warranty when they buy a television set than his clients have gotten with the lease agreements. He equated the lawsuit to a "David and Goliath" type of situation. According to the suit, the landowners entered into various gas and oil leases with O&G Investment Holdings, LLC, Wooster, Ohio, between 2003 and 2005. A total of approximately 1,200 acres of land is involved, Townsend said. The suit alleges all landowners were told they would have an opportunity to review their respective leases before they would be notarized, but that did not happen, and the landowners were never given a chance to make appropriate changes or modifications. The plaintiffs were "promised" O&G would reasonably develop the minerals in order to extract the minerals and pay royalties, according to the suit. However, the defendants failed to reasonably develop the mineral resources or explore any of the land for oil and gas, the suit says. Townsend said the leases are set to expire on or around April 25, and the defendants are attempting to begin a last-minute operation.

Read more here: <http://www.centredaily.com/2012/02/08/3082316/company-wants-to-buy-public-rail.html#storylink=cpy>

SCRANTON TIMES-TRIBUNE

In construction, stature isn't barrier PITTSTON TWP. - Becky Snyder stands at just 4-foot-11, yet her stature isn't a barrier as she moves earth with heavy machinery powerful enough to knock down a house. Ms. Snyder, a construction foreman, and Jennifer Coutts operate the largest machines in Pittston Twp.-based Linde Construction's fleet, routinely running bulldozers, loaders and excavators as the company lays miles of pipeline in the Marcellus Shale drilling areas. They work in Dimock, where Ms. Coutts operates heavy machinery with manicured nails. The pipeline construction industry in the Marcellus Shale region has led to a growth in jobs, and, as Ms. Snyder and Ms. Coutts exemplify, the jobs aren't just for the guys. According to the state Department of Labor and Industry, the percentage of women in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton/Hazleton metro area working in all construction industries in 2011 has increased slightly to 12.8 percent from 11.8 percent five years ago. Ms. Snyder, 44, of Carbondale, has spent the past 21 years working for Linde, a utility pipeline and heavy construction contractor. She started as a flagger and advanced to laborer and machine operator. As a woman working in a non-traditional career, she said she works to break down barriers every day. "You have to prove yourself every day. You have to become tough, and you have to become one...

Susquehanna passes, Lackawanna introduces drilling impact fee Susquehanna County commissioners approved a Marcellus Shale drilling impact fee Wednesday that could potentially bring in \$12 million in revenue for the county. In

Lackawanna County, the first step was taken toward imposing a state-authorized fee on deep gas wells, too, though how much revenue the county will realize from the fee is still an open question. Susquehanna Commissioners MaryAnn Warren, Alan Hall and Mike Giangrieco voted unanimously to levy a fee on unconventional gas wells in accordance with Act 13, the Marcellus Shale impact fee law approved by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Tom Corbett earlier this year. Mr. Giangrieco said Susquehanna County could receive up to approximately \$12 million in revenue. One resident voiced concerns about a provision of the bill stating that the acceptable noise level for drilling activity at a homeowner's property line is 60 decibels. While Mr. Giangrieco admitted not all of the bill's provisions were perfect, it was a step forward. "That is just one of the problems with this bill," Mr. Giangrieco said. "But it is something." Susan Oliver, a representative from WPX Energy, was on hand Wednesday to assure the public that WPX would continue to fulfill its obligations to the county after the fee was passed. "I know there have been rumors that companies will no longer help maintain roads if the fee is passed," Ms. Oliver said. "But I'm here to assure you that WPX will continue its obligations to maintain public safety." Ms. Oliver said WPX has already put \$2 million into the roads in Susquehanna County and will continue to help maintain them. Meanwhile in Lackawanna County, commissioners introduced an ordinance Wednesday to levy the fee. Under the act, which requires counties to opt in by April 16, the fee can be levied only on horizontal or producing vertical wells. Vertical exploratory wells that have never been hydraulically fractured and do not produce gas, like the two drilled so far in Lackawanna, would not be subject to the fee. The fee for previously drilled horizontal wells is \$50,000. It is \$10,000 for vertical wells. Commissioner Jim Wansacz called Act 13 "something I don't think any of us love" but said the county's hands were tied. "We either have to jump and do this before the next meeting or we will not have the ability to collect any revenues whatsoever," he said. Commissioner Corey O'Brien said the potential economic benefits of Marcellus Shale development in the county have to be balanced against "the potential risks to our environment and our infrastructure."

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

Dimock: A Town Divided The nat-ural gas boom in Penn-syl-va-nia promises cheaper, cleaner burn-ing fuel, good jobs, and the pos-si-bil-ity that the U.S. could become inde-pen-dent of for-eign oil. But what are the costs? The tiny vil-lage of Dimock, Penn-syl-va-nia, home to about 1500 peo-ple, has some of the best pro-duc-ing Mar-cel-lus wells in the state. It is now famous world-wide. But not for the rea-sons some of the towns-folk would like. The name Dimock, has become syn-ony-mous with flam-ing taps and every-thing that could pos-si-bly go wrong when the gas drillers come to town. But the fight over Dimock's water and rep-u-ta-tion, has divided the town. Dimock is in the news because of claims that gas drilling has con-t-a-m-i-nated res-i-den-tial drink-ing water wells. Some in the town are furi-ous and are suing the drilling com-pany, Cabot Oil and Gas. Oth-ers are angry that the pub-lic-ity has the poten-tial of dri-ving down home val-ues, and insist the water dam-age is overblown and lim-ited to a few households. To get to Dimock, you drive through forested moun-tains, past pic-turesque dairy farms and come to one blink-ing yel-low light at a cross-roads of route 29 and route 3023. A post office and eye-glass shop sit on the cor-ner. GPS and iPhones don't work in this part of Penn-syl-va-nia. Before 9/11 cre-ated new secu-rity rules, most peo-ple here didn't have a street address. They didn't need one. There was a time neigh-bors all seemed to get along. But not anymore. Retired school teacher Vic-to-ria Switzer says gas drilling poi-soned her water with methane and drilling chem-i-cals. But she says some of her neigh-bors have turned against her. "They all want to be like the cou-ple of fam-i-lies that got rich," says Switzer. "They want to be like a Bev-erly Hill-billy or shale-ion-aire. It's about the money. They say I want my well I want my well!! They're not wor-ried about our water, but they want their well."

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

Blog : EPA's odd approach to pollution regs One of the strangest aspects of the EPA's newest rules on carbon-dioxide emissions is that they only apply to *future* power plants. Existing facilities — the ones that are actually producing all the pollution — get to carry on as they were. That seems perverse. So why does the EPA do things this way? As it happens, this is how a lot of environmental regulation gets done in the United States. Back in 2005, Harvard economist Robert Stavins even gave the strategy a catchy name: "vintage-differentiated regulation." Policymakers love this approach. Much of the Clean Air Act was written to focus on future sources of pollution while going easier on existing

facilities. The Clean Water Act and the Safe Water Drinking Act have similar structures. In his paper, Stavins explains why this approach is so appealing to wonks. First, it's typically more cost-effective to construct new facilities with modern pollution controls already built in than it is to go back and revamp older, creakier plants. Plus, of course, there are politics to consider — owners of actually existing power plants and factories are more likely to complain about regulations than hypothetical owners of hypothetical future facilities. _

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

New menhaden limits opposed LEWES — In the Kent County fishing village of Leipsic, residents are struggling just to get by. But a regional fisheries agency hasn't assessed the economic impact of proposed regulations to limit the catch of menhaden, Mayor Craig Pugh said. "We are now 47 percent impoverished and have been for the last three years," he said. The proposed harvest reduction -- aimed at rebuilding the fish stock -- "doesn't help me out much in my community." Pugh was one of a dozen people who came to an Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission hearing in Lewes on Wednesday night. The commission is drafting regulations to limit the harvest of the small, oily, bottom-of-the-food-chain menhaden. It is a fish that is the source for everything from fish oil used in vitamins to fish for livestock feed. That harvest, called the reduction fishery, amounts to 80 percent of the total catch. It was once the largest commercial fishery in Delaware, but overfishing took a toll and the industry closed in the early 1960s. These days, Delaware's commercial fishermen -- namely a group of about 100 commercially licensed crabbers -- use the fish as a bait in their crab pots. Coastwide, the bait fishery amounts to 20 percent of the catch. Most used in Delaware comes from Virginia. With a reduction in catch, the concern is that bait supply will go down and the price will go up, Pugh said. That's another cost -- on top of already rising fuel prices -- that commercial fishermen don't need, he said. Delaware fishermen aren't the only ones who use menhaden as bait. Lobster fishermen in New England use it as one of several bait options, said Toni Kerns, senior fisheries management plan coordinator with the Atlantic States Commission.

Warm winter weather means dolphins come early LEWES -- Temperatures barely dipped below 30 degrees all winter long and, now that spring is here, dolphins and other marine life have arrived early to the Delaware coast. Suzanne Thurman, the executive director of the Marine Education, Research and Rehabilitation Institute, said bottlenose dolphins typically begin to appear in the area in the second week of April, but there have already been several sightings reported. Thurman said the reason for the early appearance of the sea mammals is because the water temperatures are warmer, so the dolphins' food source traveled north sooner. "So much of what we do focuses on a food web, so one thing isn't enough to look at, it's a whole ripple effect," she said. "A lot of the animals we work with are going to gravitate toward the food sources."

Greenhouse grows year round SELBYVILLE -- With strawberry plants left over from last season, Ellen Magee decided to try something different. This winter, Magee grew strawberries in a greenhouse, which because of the mild weather fared pretty well, she said. The benefit to growing the fruit in a greenhouse is the climate and water can be controlled better than outside. "This winter was a perfect winter to try it," she said. "It was just something to see what would happen and if we could do it." This year was a learning experience, to see if there's an opportunity to do more things -- such as marketing to local restaurants -- and expand in the future, she said. Paul Parsons of Parsons Farm Produce in Dagsboro said he grew tomatoes in a greenhouse for the first time. The benefit to greenhouses is the produce comes earlier and it reduces the use of pesticides on the crop, he said, which is a money saver and creates a healthier product. "We'll have tomatoes in the middle of May versus the middle of July, (so we're) getting them earlier and it's a higher quality of fruit," he said.

Blog: An offshore wind turbine, planned off Virginia Gamesa is planning to build a single offshore turbine in Chesapeake Bay, off of Virginia. Bloomberg News reported the state's Marine Resources Commission ...

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Activ Pest Solutions Offers Mosquito Management Program In response to an overwhelming number of requests from our current customer base, we have developed a specialized treatment program to combat mosquitoes. Mosquitoes present specific management challenges to Pest Control Technicians. The products commonly used to treat ants, spiders and crickets are not always labeled for use in the areas where mosquitoes harbor or “rest”. These products have strict limitations on where they are applied, specifically in proximity to water and water runoff. Recent modifications to the Clean Water Act have further limited the treatment areas of these “conventional” products. Additionally, specific licenses are required to treat mosquitoes and to apply pesticides to vegetation. Activ Pest Solutions is licensed to treat all areas of your home and yard, including plants and trees, which are a key resting place for mosquitoes. One of the products that we use to combat mosquitoes is labeled for use in all areas in and around your home including vegetation and “near or over open water”. This product is also effective for other pest problems including ticks. The Mosquito Management Program from Activ Pest Solutions is unique to our company and friendly to the environment. If you currently have or anticipate mosquito problems at your home contact Activ Pest Solutions, 302-645-1502 for a free consultation.

Stranded seal rests at Deauville Beach A juvenile male gray seal rests on Deauville Beach after coming ashore over the weekend. He stayed a short while and left Monday morning. Marine Education, Research and Rehabilitation Institute Executive Director Suzanne Thurman said this is the only seal stranding so far this season. Normally, she said, by this time of year, dozens of seals have rested along Cape Region beaches.

ARBUTUS PATCH

Patapsco Sewage Flow Halts Shellfish Harvesting Due to the flow of up to 17 million gallons per day of untreated sewage into the Patapsco River, the Maryland Department of the Environment on March 28 closed the mouth of the Patapsco and a nearby portion of the Chesapeake Bay to shellfish harvesting. The closure will remain in effect until further notice, according to state officials. The closure was issued because of a sewage spill from a ruptured 54-inch pipe at the Patapsco Sewage Pumping Station in Baltimore Highlands that began on Mar. 25. Health officials in Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County issued notices regarding water contact for a portion of the Patapsco River. MDE determined that an area in the mouth of the Patapsco River and a nearby portion of the Chesapeake Bay normally open to shellfish harvesting will be closed. The affected area is downstream of a line running northeasterly from Rock Point to North Point and west of a line running southeasterly from North Point to the Brewerton Eastern Extension Lighted Buoy 10, and then to Seven Foot Knoll Light, to Craighill Channel Lighted Buoy 18, southwesterly to Craighill Channel Lighted Buoy 16, east to the Craighill Entrance Channel Range Rear Light then continuing east to a point of land near Shore End Downs Fishing Pier south of Pinehurst on the Anne Arundel County shore. Other areas of the Patapsco River—including the area where sewage has entered the waterway this week—have been closed to harvesting since the 1960s, according to state officials.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

Jay urges measured response to EPA greenhouse rules CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller on Wednesday urged a measured response to an Obama administration proposal that would require any new coal-fired power plants built in the U.S. to cut their greenhouse gas emissions in half. The West Virginia Democrat said coalfield leaders need to do more to ensure that technology and financing is in place to allow utilities to meet the proposed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules. "We need to grab hold of our own future, by working together to drive clean coal technology forward," Rockefeller said in a prepared statement issued the day after EPA announced its proposal. The Rockefeller statement offered a stark contrast to the reaction from other coalfield political and business leaders, who harshly condemned what they depicted as just another Obama effort to destroy the coal industry. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin issued a statement that said the proposal would "devastate West Virginia and our region," adding, "I will not stand for it." On Tuesday, Alpha Natural Resources President Kevin Crutchfield cited the EPA greenhouse gas proposal as the one government rule that would hurt the coal industry the most without providing any environmental benefits. Crutchfield also questioned whether any action was needed, given what he said was uncertainty about the science of climate change.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE JOURNAL

State to finalize Chesapeake Bay clean-up plan March 30 The Chesapeake Bay Program is approaching a — pardon the bad but almost unavoidable pun — watershed moment. It's the shift from years of informal intention for a healthy bay to firm pollution reduction commitments on a timeline. "We've been working toward these commitments for almost two decades and all the actors have been sort of slip-sliding around," said Joseph Hankins, immediate past chairman of the Jefferson County Public Service District, in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. "Now we'll have understandable benchmarks and milestones," Hankins said. Known especially for its crabs, clams and oysters, the bay was found in the 1970s to have a massive "dead zone" at its center: a section depleted of oxygen by blooms of algae fed, in large part, by nutrients from fertilizer running off of farms and lawns. In addition, sediment from increasing development across the watershed was clogging habitat at the bottom of the bay. In 2010, following decades of failed clean-up attempts, the Environmental Protection Agency completed a Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load. The TMDL is a modeling exercise that aims to achieve water quality standards by inventorying pollution sources and setting a pollution "budget." The idea was to clean up the bay by 2025. And on March 30, the states in the bay watershed have to file Phase II Watershed Implementation Plans, or WIPs, with the EPA. "What we've been working out over the past year and a half is where the cuts occur to meet the constraints in the TMDL — how to actually meet the targets," Hankins said. "The Phase II WIP really commits us as a state and locks us into milestones for 2017 and 2025." Affected in West Virginia are the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac highlands counties — Jefferson, Berkeley, Morgan, Hampshire, Mineral, Hardy, Grant and Pendleton — as well as the small part of Monroe County, in the southeast part of the state, which lies in the James River watershed. The Phase II WIP sets milestones for various sectors in those counties, such as urban and construction stormwater, wastewater treatment, and agriculture — by far the largest land use in the West Virginia Potomac drainage. Milestones address the range of approaches to controlling nutrient and sediment pollution. Two-year milestones include, in urban and construction stormwater, creation of a statewide stormwater management guidance manual; in wastewater, tracking of wastewater treatment plant upgrade and permit compliance schedules; and, in agriculture, development nutrient management plans for Confined Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

Weather helps, hurts Chesapeake Bay grasses The protective underwater grasses in the Chesapeake Bay have dropped to their lowest levels since 2006, according to the latest report from Maryland and Virginia scientists. The scientists from the Chesapeake Bay Program, a regional partnership, view the grasses as a key measure of bay health because they provide shelter for fish and crabs, protect the shoreline and keep the water clear. The program measures the grasses annually from the Susquehanna Flats to the mouth of the bay, as well as those in the system's rivers. In all last year, the amount of grasses declined by 21 percent, or 16,950 acres, from the year before, scientists said Wednesday. That left 63,074 acres still growing in the bay. The scientists attributed the decline to unusually hot weather and heavy rains in the last two years, though those conditions actually helped some areas of the bay. "The summer of 2010 was unusually hot, causing eelgrass beds in the lower bay to severely die back after they had been surveyed earlier in the year," said Robert J. Orth, a professor at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. "Then in spring of 2011, during the growth season, heavy rains and freshwater..."

Environmentalists rally for clean water in Annapolis

Bolton Street Synagogue launches environmental project near Stony Run Bolton Street Synagogue will willingly lose about 17 parking spaces this spring, for the good of the environment. Pending Baltimore City permit approval, 3,400 square feet of the synagogue's asphalt lower parking lot off West Cold Spring Lane at the foot of the Stony Run will be ripped up and will not be resurfaced — instead becoming a part of the walking path that follows the north Baltimore stream. "Those parking spaces are going away," said Ashley Traut, senior storm water management program manager for Blue Water Baltimore, an environmental group that is co-sponsoring the project. Traut said the synagogue's board of directors approved the plan. "It's a big sacrifice for them," he said. Plans for the project were presented Tuesday night by the group The Friends of Stony Run, which met at Bolton Street Synagogue, 212 West Cold Spring Lane. Co-

sponsoring the project is The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, which sees it as a pilot project to inspire other area synagogues and Jewish institutions to help protect the Chesapeake Bay. In this case, the goal is to reduce runoff into the Stony Run and ultimately the bay, by removing the asphalt lot, an "impervious" surface that environmentalists say contributes to runoff and pollutants in the bay. Nina Beth Cardin, founder and director of the five-year-old Baltimore Jewish Environmental Network, has been pushing for more ecological activism in the Baltimore area Jewish community and has long had Bolton Street Synagogue in mind for a pilot project, organizers said. Other co-sponsors include the Roland Park Community Foundation, which is giving a \$10,000 grant. The project is part of the Greater Roland Park Master Plan. Also giving \$10,000 is the Chesapeake Trust. Blue Water Baltimore is providing \$4,000, Traut said. "One of the goals of Friends of Stony Run and the Roland Park Master Plan is to approach property owners abutting the Stony Run to see about participating in making the stream healthier," said Aleeza Oshry, manager of The Associated's Sustainability Initiative.

Blog: 'facts' that wouldn't fool a fifth-grader The shad, America's founding fish, has started its annual run up the Chesapeake Bay and into the Susquehanna River, and here in Maryland, Land of Pleasant Living, there's been a run of foolish facts, too. My email box has been full of them lately, a sudden spring run stirred to life by recent columns on Maryland's many millionaires and the wild idea that they should pay income taxes at a higher rate than the rest of us. "Your commentary this morning helps me understand why our country is in such a dire situation," began one of several letters I received about Sunday's column on the well-off's cranky attitude toward taxes. The writer's name was Steve, a self-described conservative and "ashamed" Democrat. "Let me explain this in a way even a fifth grader can understand," he wrote.

WBAL-TV BALTIMORE

Halfway Done? Not Quite The 2012 Maryland General Assembly, held in the oldest operating State House in the country, approached the halfway point of the 90-day session, with many issues still unresolved. The two-ton gorilla in the room is the \$1 billion budget deficit the state faces. Even more daunting is how to close the gap in such austere economic times. Legislators have a long list of proposals and options that require some very tough decisions. With record-high gas prices and devastating unemployment still looming, tax cuts stimulate heated debate and backlash from constituents. Tax proposals that include increasing the gas tax, sales tax and income tax are on the table. Proposals to protect the Chesapeake Bay, add table games to casinos and split teacher pensions and Social Security benefits with local jurisdictions are all being considered. Now, it's time for our elected officials to do the heavy-lifting. They must address the deficit and provide services to citizens. The answers are not partisan, but require them to do what's best for Maryland despite party loyalty or future political aspirations. We are depending on them to do what is right.

Group Rallies For Passage Of Clean Water Bills ANNAPOLIS, Md. -- About 100 Marylanders rallied on Lawyers Mall in Annapolis on Wednesday in support of pollution-reducing legislation that they said would protect the public's health and create jobs. Advocates of the bills said they would also protect the seafood and recreation industries, reduce flooding and make the state's waterways safe for swimming and fishing. There are only two weeks left in the legislative session, but advocates are optimistic that clean water bills will make their way through the General Assembly. Officials said bills that increase the Bay Restoration Fund to cover wastewater treatment plant upgrades, as well as those that require the state's largest jurisdictions to create fees to reduce polluted storm runoff have already passed in the House. Another bill that would reduce pollution from poorly planned development and septic systems has passed in the Senate. "If we miss this opportunity to finish the job of saving the bay, we may never have another," said Will Baker, the president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. "Our children and grandchildren should be able to swim in Maryland waters without worrying for their health. We can make that happen." Gov. Martin O'Malley also spoke at the rally.

WGMD-RADIO

Catch A Snakehead & Win A Prize Up to \$200 Anglers who catch a snakehead fish could win prizes worth up to \$200 in the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' 2nd Annual Snakehead Contest. Anyone who removes at least one of the invasive, non-native fish from the Chesapeake Bay's watershed has the chance to walk away with prizes from Bass Pro Shops at Arundel Mills, the Maryland Park Service, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. To enter, an angler should submit catch details and a photo of their dead Snakehead online through the DNR Angler's log, a popular social fishing

SALISBURY DAILY TIMES

Editorial: 'Sustainable' is a healthy trend In what could be construed as a giant step backward --but a positive one -- consumers are talking about sustainability in regard to their food purchases. You'll hear it in the grocery store, in restaurants and fish markets, and at farmers markets and wherever fresh produce is found. But what, exactly, does it mean? It seems to be the next big thing to follow the trend toward organic food. It's definitely the next step away from the giant corporate farm. As consumers, we've become far separated from the source of much of our food. Instead of growing or catching food, we buy it after someone else has grown it, processed it and transported it from its source to our local supermarkets. While initially, the trend was seen as positive, allowing us to purchase things like fresh oranges, strawberries and lettuce year round, in the past decade problems have surfaced. Outbreaks of bacterial or chemical contamination --sometimes deadly --that lead to illness, death and mass recalls are all too common. The organic movement was a first reaction, seeking to reduce the potential for chemical contamination from pesticides and other additives used in the processing and transportation of food en masse. Organic foods must be produced under specific conditions and certified through inspections or they cannot be labeled as such. It was a good first start. Sustainable foods and fisheries take it a step further, identifying the source and every step of the way from farm or water to table.

Students study climate change BERLIN -- The watermen, landowners and developers sat in a circle, debating how to handle a possible housing project to be built in a coastal area. The chat proved to be a thoughtful one, filled with fresh ideas and some artful compromises. "I'll give you \$100 if you don't build the building. How about that?" said 8-year-old Grace Acle, a third-grader at Westside Intermediate School, speaking for watermen. "If you build it on the marsh, the water's going to go over it. What's the use of that?" said 9-year-old Anna Smith, a voice for the conservationists and a third-grader at North Salisbury Elementary. "We could build a park that still has room for the water," said developer and Pemberton Elementary School third-grader Haleigh Aydelotte, 9. "And then build it where people wanted it, but then move it some, and maybe put the rest of it in a different location." The role-players were among 130 students from Wicomico County's gifted and talented program who participated in a new Climate Science Issues Investigation Program. They met with local experts on Monday, at the Paul S. Sarbanes Coastal Ecology Center just outside Assateague Island, to talk about the science behind climate change. Another batch of 130 kids went through the program last week. The student-researched program is the first of its kind on the Eastern Shore, and will focus on what effects climate change can have on local wildlife, agriculture, infrastructure, and the economy, according Carrie Samis with the Maryland Coastal Bays Program. The three-month course was her idea.

Family gets OK to install wind turbine on rooftop OCEAN CITY -- A family has permission to install a set of energy-generating wind turbines on the roof of their Boardwalk home. The set of three will comprise the first turbines on the roof of a single-family residence in Ocean City, and the Villa Santa family has been lobbying for permission to build them on top of their 14th Street house since 2011. The Town Council gave its unanimous blessing for the Villa Santas to be permitted this week, after municipal Planning and Development Director Jesse Houston recommended approval of the project. "They've been working on this a long time," said Council President Jim Hall.

Commentary: Somerset turbines will wreak havoc on residents On Feb. 28, a public meeting was held at the Somerset County Board of Commissioners in Princess Anne concerning large-scale wind turbines. The Somerset County Planning Commission has already sent a favorable recommendation concerning this wind turbine project.

Town's water woes nearly over PRINCESS ANNE -- Two wells that will pump water through a new reverse osmosis system before it flows out of customers' taps could be online later this year, marking the symbolic resolution of an old dispute between the Somerset County Sanitary Commission and the state. As part of a 2009 agreement, Maryland Environmental Service, which operates water and sewer systems at Eastern Correctional Institution, will treat Princess Anne's water with a new RO system that was financed by the state. The system has been treating water from the prison wells since last summer, and eventually will treat water from the Sanitary District's wells which will be built sometime in the next few months on a piece of property between ECI and the site of a planned Wal-Mart distribution center on Revells Neck Road. "We're still doing a little tweaking," said Ellen Frketic, chief of water and wastewater services at MES. "But it's been working real well," While the use of reverse osmosis will be new to the Sanitary District, the prison installed a system -- the first one in Maryland -- in the early 1990s because the power plant required treated

water, Frketic said. The new RO plant is much larger than the first one in order to accommodate both the prison and Sanitary District customers, she said. The new Princess Anne wells will be drilled in the Patapsco aquifer where fluoride levels are higher than allowable limits set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and reverse osmosis was deemed the best way to treat the water. As part of the process, water under high pressure is forced through microscopic pores in a membrane that removes everything from the water, including beneficial minerals. Frketic said the treated water is then blended with untreated water to add "the good stuff" back into the drinking water supply.

Council OKs turbine funding CRISFIELD -- City officials have taken the first step toward building a wind energy system to power Crisfield's sewage treatment plant by agreeing to get interim financing for a study on how it will affect the power grid. In a special meeting Friday night, City Council members signed a \$35,000 borrowing resolution to pay for the study which is required by Delmarva Power rather than take money from the already tight budget. "Could we come up with \$35,000? Absolutely," said Mayor Percy Purnell. "But we would have to take it from somewhere else." The city has been approved for \$4.8 million in state grants that will pay for the turbine, and some of that money will likely be used to repay the loan, he said. But under the terms of the grant, the state won't release the funds until the project is ready to begin construction. Borrowing the money was necessary to get the project under way, since the study will take about 12 weeks, Purnell said. City Councilman Mark Konapelsky said the turbine -- which is expected to save the city about \$20,000 per month on electricity -- will be a boon to the city. "If this comes to fruition, it will be huge for Crisfield," he said. Delmarva Power officials have said the company requires impact studies for all large-scale projects that plan to go on the power grid. The \$35,000 fee is charged by an outside contractor, and Delmarva Power does not make any money on it.

FREDERICK NEWS-POST

New fee on table for property owners ANNAPOLIS -- Frederick County property owners might soon have to pay the county for their rooftops and blacktop to help fund a massive Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort. A proposal that would require the county and nine other jurisdictions to levy a stormwater management fee passed through the Maryland House of Delegates on Friday despite ardent opposition from a couple of Frederick County delegates. Critics worry the fee would saddle local residents with some of the financial burden for reducing runoff-related pollution, a mission officials estimate could cost the county as much as \$2.35 billion through 2025. Though the bill has hidden quietly behind headline-grabbing revenue proposals, it could create fees that will overshadow proposed tax increases, said Delegate Kelly Schulz, who fought the legislation during floor debate. "This was the sleeper bill," she said in an interview Wednesday. "This is going to be the largest immediate dent in the pocketbooks of the counties that are going to be affected." The proposal is part of a massive drive to slash nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in the Chesapeake Bay by 2025. Stormwater runoff is a major culprit in dirtying the state's waterways, according to a legislative analysis. It accounts for more than 18 percent of the nitrogen and 22 percent of the phosphorus entering the bay from Maryland sources, the report showed. "We all say we care about the bay. Stormwater has been the biggest threat facing the bay for years," said Delegate Tom Hucker, who sponsored the bill that would ask nine counties and the City of Baltimore to create the new fee. "The bill simply requires each jurisdiction to do their part by having a fee. ... It just says, you can't be a free rider. You have to take responsibility." Hucker, who represents Montgomery County, said the measure does not burden local property owners; it just offers local governments a fair way to deal with stormwater management projects held up for lack of financing. The bill would also create jobs as these runoff-reducing projects move forward, Hucker said. The City of Frederick already charges a stormwater management fee that varies with property size; owners of a house on a quarter acre pay almost \$47 annually, according to the city's website.

CUMBERLAND TIMES-NEWS

New Md. poll reveals caution on fracking CUMBERLAND — A new poll shows a strong majority of Marylanders favor a cautious approach on the use of fracking to drill for natural gas in the Marcellus shale in the western portion of the state. The poll contrasts sharply with previous industry-funded polls on natural gas drilling, and there's a reason for that, said Mike Tidwell, director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. "The message Maryland voters are sending is that second chances are rare and expensive," Tidwell said. Pennsylvania is now trying to do studies after permitting drilling. "We want to do the opposite in Maryland," he said. Citizens want the industry to pay for the studies, Tidwell said. "I haven't seen an industry-funded poll that asked Maryland voters about contaminated water ... water quality or the concerns people in Pennsylvania have experienced over fracking," Tidwell said. In fact, one of the

reasons his organization commissioned the poll by OpinionWorks was to combat the impression given by the industry polls. "We felt there was a gap," he said. The industry polls avoided questions about fracking or the chemicals used in fracking. "There are no such things as perfect energy resources," Tidwell said. "The gas industry only wants to ask you, 'Do you want jobs, money and royalties?'" Fundamentally, the results show Marylanders want to have studies done before any drilling in Marcellus shale begins. In Western Maryland, 65 percent of voters also answered yes to the question on studies. The poll only asked two questions, the first was: "Do you think the state of Maryland should or should not conduct studies to develop what are known as 'best practices' guidelines — including environmental protection guidelines — for energy companies to follow before permitting hydraulic fracturing when drilling for natural gas in Maryland?" This question brought a 71 percent "yes" response, according to the poll results. The second poll question was: "If such studies were required, should the energy companies or the taxpayers pay for them?" That question brought an 81 percent "yes" response, according to the poll results. "Any numbers this high are rare," Tidwell said. "Policymakers and reform advocates say the polling numbers show that the Maryland state Senate should follow the House of Delegates lead and immediately pass HB 1204 to fund safety studies related to fracking for gas," a press release from the network said.

Editorial: Facts about shale gas are sorely needed Responsible natural gas development from the Marcellus Shale formation could bring huge benefits for Maryland and its western counties and families, say the Baltimore-based Sage Policy Group and other experts. Horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (fracking) coax oil and natural gas from shale and other rock formations that previously refused to yield their hydrocarbon riches — reducing energy costs, creating jobs, and generating county and state revenue. This proven and rapidly advancing technology has obliterated claims that we are running out of petroleum. Instead, the USA finds itself blessed with centuries of oil and gas. By expanding supplies, fracking has reduced the price for clean-burning natural gas to under \$3 per thousand cubic feet (or million BTU), compared to \$8 a few years ago. The gas is supplanting coal for electricity generation. Costly new Environmental Protection Agency regulations are forcing many U.S. coal-fired power plants to shut down. Near term replacement plants will more likely be gas-powered than nuclear. Cheap gas will make heating and electricity more affordable for families, hospitals, government buildings and businesses, and feed stocks less expensive for makers of plastics, paints and other petrochemical products. That means thousands of jobs created or saved. Natural gas provides essential backup power for wind turbines, whose electricity generation plummets to zero 70-80 percent of the time, adversely affecting homes, schools, hospitals and businesses dozens of times every day. However, environmental activists are spreading unfounded fears about this technology. Calling it "dangerous" and "poisonous," they claim "unregulated" companies operate with little concern for ecological values and causing cancer, earthquakes and groundwater contamination. The allegations have prompted Maryland and other states to launch drawn-out studies or impose moratoria that will postpone drilling and the benefits it would bring. Facts are sorely needed. Drilling and fracking have been carefully and effectively regulated by states for decades. As studies by the University of Texas and state agencies have documented, there has never been a confirmed case of groundwater contamination due to fracking. Even EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson acknowledges that.

CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

EPA Cleans Up New Power Plant Standards WASHINGTON - The Obama administration's tightening of pollution regulations for new coal-fired power plants Tuesday is a step in the right direction, Maryland politicians and environmentalists said, but some said it doesn't go far enough. The Environmental Protection Agency's pollution standards would require new coal-fired plants to install additional pollution controls such as carbon-capture technology. The standards do not apply to existing power plants or those that will start construction within the next 12 months. Maryland Democratic Sen. Ben Cardin said the new rules should help improve the health of the imperiled Chesapeake Bay. "I applaud the years of thoughtful work and rigorous scientific study" that went into the EPA's creation of the regulations, Cardin said. "The scientific evidence of the threat that increased greenhouse gas emissions pose to Maryland and the health of Chesapeake Bay, to our nation's farmers and natural ecosystems, and most importantly to the world our children will inherit, is irrefutable." Others questioned the administration's reliance on carbon-capture technology -- a way of trapping carbon emissions and storing them underground -- as a tool for reducing pollution. "There's nobody in the world that does that today. It's very expensive," said former Bush administration EPA Air Administrator Jeff Holmstead. In a recent report, the Department of Energy said that the carbon-capture technology won't be commercially available until 2020, according to Holmstead. The ruling, Holmstead said, effectively bans new coal energy plants. Tommy Landers, the director of the advocacy group Environment

Maryland, also believes carbon capture is a questionable idea. "I don't think (carbon capture) is a long-term solution. We need to reduce pollution at its source," he said. The exemption of existing power plants affects Maryland because the state is at the end of a "tailpipe" of pollution from other states, Landers said. In addition, there are nine coal-fired power plants in Maryland, and none of them use carbon-capture technology.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND NEWSPAPERS

Commentary: Conserve to Get Revenge on Oil Barons Just when one or two of us might have been willing to accept higher gasoline taxes to repair our roads and help clean the Chesapeake Bay, gas prices are going up anyway with no redeeming benefits. What's worse, outrage over the price hikes has weakened the spines of politicians from President Obama on down, putting anti-pollution measures even farther out of reach. Even "fracking" for natural gas, with its toxic consequences in Pennsylvania, seems to have grown more acceptable. But there is nothing politicians of either party can actually do about the gasoline price spike — despite some promises to the contrary. Our only recourse is to buy as little of the oily stuff as we can. Then, conservation can still help the Chesapeake Bay and the environment nationwide. Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley proposed last month to impose a 6 percent tax on gasoline at the wholesale level, which at the time would have added about 18 cents a gallon to the current state tax of 23.5 cents per gallon.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.)

Chesapeake grasses down in 2011 BALTIMORE -- Underwater grasses in the Chesapeake Bay declined more than 20 percent last year, hurt by summer heat and heavy rains and snowmelt that sent tons of mud and debris into the bay, the Chesapeake Bay Program said Wednesday. The losses mean levels of the grasses that provide food and homes for fish, birds and other species have dropped to their lowest point since 2006. Scientists said grasses are now at historically low levels, but the news was tempered by growth found in some parts of the bay. The underwater grasses are important to the health of the Chesapeake because in addition to providing habitat for crabs and striped bass, they also improve water clarity by trapping sediment, add oxygen to bay water, provide food for waterfowl and help prevent shoreline erosion. Heavy rains from back-to-back storms that caused widespread flooding throughout the Northeast last fall sent tons of garbage and sediment into the bay. That raised concerns about damage to underwater grasses in the upper bay, but the Chesapeake Bay Program said last year that aerial photos taken in November showed the damage was not as bad as feared.

House approves 7.5 percent natural gas tax BALTIMORE — House lawmakers Monday night passed a 7.5 percent state severance tax on natural gas in a 82-51 vote, after delegates on Saturday fended off an amendment from Delegate Wendell Beitzel, R-Garrett, that would cap state and local taxes on natural gas extraction at 7.5 percent combined. "The amendment would incorporate all severance taxes," Beitzel said. "Local, county and state taxes together could not exceed 7.5 percent." Garrett County currently has a severance tax of 5.5 percent, which means the state could assess a severance tax of only 2 percent under Beitzel's amendment. Allegany County's severance tax of 7 percent would limit the state's share to just 0.5 percent. Higher rates were needed to enforce regulations, proponents say. Delegate Maggie McIntosh, D-Baltimore City, chair of the House Environmental Matters Committee and a sponsor of the severance tax, said applying different rates to every county would create administrative problems. She also said the 7.5 percent cap Beitzel proposed would not provide enough money for the regulatory oversight needed to protect human health and the environment. "Limiting the state to .05 percent would be wrong," McIntosh said. "It's going to be the state that's called for environmental cleanup and for other kinds of issues that happen ... when drilling begins." McIntosh suggested that Garrett and Allegany counties could lower their severance taxes to make the tax more "reasonable" to gas companies. The 7.5 percent tax was amended down from 15 percent by the House Ways and Means Committee on March 20 by a vote of 16-5. The severance tax is primarily aimed at Marcellus shale exploration, which requires the process of hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," to free gas trapped in shale formations deep in the Earth's surface. But the 7.5 percent severance tax will also apply to conventional gas wells that are not drilled using the fracking method. Fracking has been blamed for contamination of groundwater in Pennsylvania and New York over the last decade, where Marcellus Shale exploration has been the most active. New York placed a moratorium on fracking three years ago until it could be regulated. Lawmakers there are now poised to lift the moratorium.

Sewage leak closes shellfishing near Baltimore BALTIMORE - Maryland environmental officials are warning the public to avoid waters of the Chesapeake Bay and the Patapsco River near the site of a sewage main break. Shellfish

harvesting has also been closed at the mouth of the Patapsco and nearby portions of the bay. The 54-inch main broke Sunday at a Baltimore County pumping station. The line carries about 17 million gallons of sewage a day. Sewage has continued to leak since then, but MDE spokesman Jay Apperson says crews were expected to begin pumping sewage around the break Wednesday afternoon. The department says the area where the break occurred has been closed to shellfish harvesting since the 1960s. The closest area normally open to shellfish harvesting is more than 12 miles from the site of the leak. _

Maryland hopes to win with sustainable crab catch Deciding among the crab offerings at the supermarket can be daunting. Jumbo lump, backfin or claw? Chesapeake, Gulf or Indonesian? Competition is tough when it comes to the packaged blue crab meat many associate with the Chesapeake Bay but that often comes from the Gulf of Mexico, Venezuela and the Far East. That's one reason Maryland fisheries officials hope to set their catch apart by touting the state's sustainable fishing methods. Maryland is in the early stages of seeking Marine Stewardship Council certification for its blue crab harvest, which one chef predicted would be "huge" in helping sales. The state is seeking the certification as more people become concerned about where their food comes from and how its production affects the environment. The certification looks at the impact of harvesting on the environment and other species, whether fisheries managers have the ability to monitor the species and whether the harvest is being tracked adequately. Louisiana recently won certification for its crab harvest, and Maryland also has applied for its striped bass fishery. "Restaurants are really looking for something like that. There are a lot of restaurants that focus on sustainability issues and they really haven't had a blue crab to be able to embrace," said Steve Vilnit, seafood marketing specialist for Maryland's Department of Natural Resources. Crabs are the Chesapeake Bay's biggest moneymaker, bringing in \$52 million in Maryland in 2009, and many chefs believe they are among the world's best. The lower salinity of the upper Chesapeake Bay makes the meat sweeter and more tender, and the crabs hibernate over the winter, storing fat that makes them taste richer than nonhibernating crabs from farther south, said Chad Wells, executive chef at Alewife in Baltimore.

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Editorial: Uranium Mining: Study hall A study panel examining the merits of uranium mining in Pittsylvania will hold four meetings open to the public. This is good, and the McDonnell administration deserves credit for the openness. Less good, though, is the rationale offered for keeping some meetings closed and withholding certain documents until a final report is complete. That sounds to us like an attempt to control the narrative. But according to the governor's chief of staff, Martin Kent, it might be necessary to prevent people from misinterpreting what they see: "If information is released prematurely," he says, "it will not be a complete picture." Maybe — though as Megan Rhyne of the Virginia Coalition for Open Government says, that's an awfully condescending rationale. It implies members of the public can't accurately interpret information that's disseminated piecemeal, and need to have it explained and contextualized for them. Maybe some do — but it's not the state government's job to do that for them, and it certainly isn't the state's job to withhold information in order to protect people from their own ostensible lack of smarts. So here's a proposal: Hold more open meetings, and publicize documents as they become available. If we run into any big words, we'll borrow a dictionary.

Editorial: Gasoline: Pumping partisanship Apparently politicians aren't the only ones who change their tune about gasoline prices. The rank and file do it, too. Democratic big shots who used to slam George W. Bush for letting gasoline prices get out of hand are giving Barack Obama a pass on the issue. And Republican pols who used to understand the laws of supply and demand seem to have forgotten them now that a Democrat occupies the White House. Comes now a new survey from The Washington Post. It finds that in 2006, 73 percent of Democrats said President Bush could "do something" about gasoline prices. Now only 33 percent think President Obama can do anything about them. Likewise, in 2006 only 47 percent of Republicans thought Bush could fix gas prices. Now 65 percent of them think Obama can fix them.

NORFOLK VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Feds take first step toward possible offshore drilling in Va. **NORFOLK** -- The federal government cracked open the door Wednesday to possible drilling for oil and natural gas off the Virginia coast, a policy shift applauded by Gov. Bob McDonnell but jeered by environmentalists. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced the change, which affects all mid-Atlantic and Southern coastal states, after touring a company in downtown Norfolk that specializes in collecting and analyzing scientific data from ocean depths. Salazar and Tommy Beaudreau, director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, said they will consider plans to allow companies like Fugro Atlantic to go offshore and conduct seismic tests and other research to determine what natural resources might lie beneath the Outer Continental Shelf of the Atlantic Ocean. Such work was shelved by President Barack Obama two years ago when he decided to block proposed drilling leases for oil and gas off Virginia after the record oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Virginia today is not included in a national list of recommended offshore lease sites for 2012-2017. However, Salazar said that if scientific research is allowed, and if it shows ample resources exist that energy companies might safely extract, the state could be added to that list through a special amendment. The turnabout, Salazar said, stems from the president's new "all of the above" energy policy, which includes more exploration and drilling for domestic fossil fuels, as well as developing cleaner alternative sources such as solar and wind. McDonnell reacted quickly to the announcement, thanking the Obama administration for the "small step forward" but adding that it follows "many previous steps back." "We should be looking for every opportunity to safely produce more domestic energy," the governor said in a statement. "Our citizens need the jobs; our nation needs the energy. Instead, the Obama administration declared a seven-year timeout. That was the wrong decision." A Sierra Club activist, Ellis James, appeared at a news conference Wednesday at Fugro Atlantic's offices in Norfolk and carried signs urging no offshore drilling. James said he was disappointed but not surprised by Salazar's announcement, adding that offshore testing and research is not safe and should be opposed.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Va. environmentalists cheer new U.S. pollution limits **RICHMOND** --Environmental groups in Virginia are hailing new Obama administration limits on carbon pollution from new power plants. They say the new rules announced Tuesday will protect public health in Virginia and help spur innovation in so-called clean technologies. The first-ever limits on heat-trapping pollution from new power plants are moving forward despite protests from industry and Republicans. They argue the regulation will raise electricity prices and kill off coal. Some environmental groups say the new limits don't go far enough because the regulation "grandfathers" in existing plants. In Virginia, the Sierra Club and other groups are battling a proposed coal-fired power plant in Surry County. The \$5 billion plant still faces a long list of environmental hurdles.

ROANOKE TIMES

Environmental regulators list Virginia's worst polluters - www.roanoke.com The Radford Arsenal is again at the top of the list, but the DEQ says the state's overall emissions have decreased. An ammunition plant, a paper mill and a coal-burning power plant are among the biggest polluters in Western Virginia, according to a report released Wednesday by state environmental regulators. Topping the statewide list for the fourth consecutive year was the Radford Army Ammunition Plant, which in 2010 released 12.5 million pounds of toxins, mostly into the New River. The plant, also known as the Radford Arsenal, churned out nearly four times the emissions of the second-ranking facility, a power plant in Chesterfield. Each year, factories, power plants and other industries are ranked by the Toxics Release Inventory, compiled by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Third on the list is MeadWestvaco Corp., a paper mill in Covington that released 3.3 million pounds of toxins in 2010, the most recent year for which numbers are available. The Clinch River Power Plant in Russell County was the other Western Virginia facility to make the DEQ's top 10 list of polluters. The coal-fired plant ranked eighth in the state, with 1.5 million pounds of toxins released, most of them into the air. Statewide, the amount of chemicals released in 2010 from all facilities covered by the report was down 4.2 percent from the year before, according to the DEQ. And most of the facilities — which released a total of 46.3 million pounds of chemicals into the land, air and water in 2010 — are in compliance with state permits that regulate their emissions, said DEQ spokesman Bill Hayden. In general, the permits set limits well below levels that are considered to be a risk to public health or the environment. Still, environmentalists said the numbers show a need for increased regulation. "Virginia's waterways are a polluter's paradise right now," said Laura Anderson, a field organizer for Environment Virginia, which last week released a report showing that the 18 million pounds of toxins dumped into Virginia lakes, rivers and streams is the second-largest amount in the nation.

Franklin County's Gereau Center nominated for Green Ribbon Award The Gereau Center in Franklin County has been

nominated for the U.S. Department of Education's new Green Ribbon Award. The award acknowledges schools that strive for zero environmental impact, improve the health and performance of students and staff, and educate students about the environment and sustainability in its curriculum, according to the department. This is the first year the award will be given.

STAUNTON NEWS LEADER

Commentary: Forests are Chesapeake's best friends The (Feb. 29) article "Study Raises Doubts about EPA Model" reports concerns about how much sediment pollutant loading should be attributed to forests in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and about the Chesapeake Bay model. I am chair of the Forestry Workgroup, which is part of the Chesapeake Bay Program. One of the primary roles of the FWG is to provide forestry input to the CB model. For many years, I have been impressed at how responsive the modelers are to this input. The model used by the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership was developed with decades of stakeholder input including substantial peer review. There is nothing arbitrary about the model or, to the point, how the sediment load is assigned — all estimated loads are based either on literature values or on national data bases which are consistent with literature erosion rate values. These loadings are then calibrated to actual stream monitoring data. This is not a "black box" as all documentation and information about the model is publicly accessible, and much of it is on the CBP website.

DELMARVA NOW

Virginia OKs bay wind turbine RICHMOND -- State approval has been given for a towering wind turbine generator prototype to be constructed in the lower Chesapeake Bay off Northampton County. Gov. Bob McDonnell announced Tuesday that the Virginia Marine Resources Commission had voted unanimously to approve construction of a 479-foot-tall, 5-megawatt wind turbine three miles off the town of Cape Charles. Construction of the prototype turbine is scheduled to be completed late next year, which "would be before other offshore wind energy projects are slated to be built in other parts of the country," the governor's office said.

MISCELLANEOUS

WBGH-TV BINGHAMTON, NY

Cabot CEO on EPA Results We recently had the chance to talk with the CEO of Cabot Oil and Gas. Dan Dinges told us that he's pleased that the recent water test results at 11 homes in Dimock, taken by the Environmental Protection Agency, support his company's data that shows the water meets drinking water standards. According to the EPA, the results did not show levels of contamination that would cause health concerns. The federal agency got involved last year because it wasn't convinced that the water in the area of Susquehanna County was safe. The goal of the EPA's testing is to determine if hydro-fracking contaminated wells. Dinges says Cabot's operation is prudent and not environmentally destructive. "We were not surprised by the results of the tests. We've been testing. We supplied the EPA with over 10,000 pages of water test documentation. The PA DEP has also had a number of water tests. We were perfectly comfortable with the water tests that had been furnished." The EPA is still sampling water supplies. In total, it will testing about 60 wells, some of those twice.

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

EPA Postpones Target Date for Internet Access to Chemical Data EPA postpones indefinitely its July target date to re-establish Internet access for certain categories of information collected through the agency's Risk Management Plan program. Lawrence Stanton, director of EPA's Office of Emergency Management, tells BNA, "The reaction we got from interested parties indicated the need for a longer and complete discussion." Stanton says EPA is "looking for a path that results in accomplishing both important purposes—national security and community right-to-know." The plan to release chemical facility risk management data drew objections from industry and members of Congress over concerns that it could jeopardize facility security

EPA Faults Draft House Bill That Would Delay Air Rules to Lower Gas Prices Draft legislation being reviewed by a

House subcommittee aims to reduce gasoline prices by delaying three air pollution rules, but a top EPA official says lawmakers are conflating the issues of regulatory burdens and increased prices. Two of the rules that the legislation would delay—Tier 3 vehicle and gasoline standards and greenhouse gas emissions standards for petroleum refineries—have not contributed to rising gas prices because they have not yet been proposed, Gina McCarthy, EPA assistant administrator for air and radiation, tells the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Power. The third rule, ozone air quality standards, also has not caused high gas prices, McCarthy says, adding that the legislation does not offer any solutions that would actually lower prices.

Power Plant Rule Sharpens Debate Over Viability of Carbon Capture An EPA proposed rule to impose limits on greenhouse gas emissions from new power plants sharpens the debate over the commercial viability of the technology to capture and store carbon dioxide underground. Any new coal-fired power plant could be forced to install carbon capture technology to meet the proposed emissions limits, but there is a sharp difference of opinion as to how soon the technology could be used on a scale large enough to satisfy the regulatory requirements. Industry representatives and some analysts say carbon capture and storage technologies will not be commercially viable anytime soon. Others, including officials with the Energy Department, say they will

Stoner Says EPA to Work With Justice on Response to Court Rulings EPA will work with the Justice Department to respond to recent court rulings dealing with the agency's enforcement and Clean Water Act authorities, EPA's top water official tells a House panel. Nancy Stoner, EPA acting assistant administrator for water, says the agency "will be discussing those [cases] with the Justice Department." Stoner was referring to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the right to challenge compliance orders under the Clean Water Act and a federal district court decision revoking EPA's authority to rejecting EPA's assertion of authority to veto dredge-and-fill permits

BLOOMBERG NEWS SERVICE

EPA seeks to limit new power-plant emissions The Environmental Protection Agency has proposed the first limits on greenhouse-gas emissions from U.S. power plants, the largest source of carbon dioxide, a pollutant linked to climate change. The rules would permit emissions from new power plants at 1,000 pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt hour, about the level for a modern natural-gas plant, the EPA said Tuesday in an e-mailed statement. The limit would effectively preclude construction of new coal-fired plants. "We're taking a common-sense step to reduce pollution in our air, protect the planet for our children, and move us into a new era of American energy," Lisa Jackson, EPA administrator, said in a statement. The standard is the first of its kind issued by the EPA for carbon-dioxide emissions. With the failure of Congress to cut carbon emissions, environmental groups see agency actions as the best chance to combat man-made climate change. "This is a milestone in the fight to rein in climate change," Joe Mendelson, climate policy director for the National Wildlife Federation, said in a statement. "The EPA is taking a big step toward protecting the world our children will inherit."